INUNDATION AT KAIAPOI.

The Great Flood of 1866.

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For a second time, within the short space of two months, it is our painful task to have to record the disastrous effects of a fresh in the Waimakariri. It will be remembered that, early in November last, the whole of Sneyd's Town, and that portion of the town of Kaiapoi situated on the island, was more or less inundated, in consequence of the breaking away of a portion of the river bank near Hassall's farm. Such was the extent of suffering on that occasion that a general determination was made to prevent a recurrence of the evil, if possible. To do this, subscriptions were made, and an embankment of such size, thickness, and stability was erected as to be calculated, by those most acquainted with the river, to be perfectly capable of resisting a heavier fresh than had been known for many years. By this means confluence was re-established, and a general sense of security from flood obtained amongst the inhabitants of the island, who had almost given up all hopes of ever feeling again. This was further increased by the fact that several heavy freshes have been down the river since the bank was erected, but without doing any serious damage or breaking through. Although, at the latter end of last week, another fresh was expected, nothing serious was anticipated; and, as the holidays were near at hand, preparations were made by one and all of the inhabitants of the district, in accordance with their means, to celebrate the advent of Christmas-day in the true old English style. Invitations to join in the Christmas fare were freely given and accepted; picnics were arranged; and up to Friday night, everything might be said to be going as merry as a marriage bell. Alas, however, for the mutability of human affairs, all were doomed by a great calamity, which will cause the Christmas of 1865 to be long remembered, to a most painful disappointment.

On the morning of Dec 23 the joyous countenances of the inhabitants were made to assume a most anxious and feverish look by the appearance in the public papers of a telegram from the Bealey, announcing the rapid rise of the Waimakariri. The river in Kaiapoi was keenly watched, when it soon became perceptible to the most careless observer, that the stream was rapidly rising; and, in fact, so quickly did the stream augment in volume, that notwithstanding the tide was running out from nine a.m., yet the river rose above two feet between the hours of twelve noon and two p.m. The scorching nor'-westers of the previous days were then remembered; and as it was also rumoured that it had been raining heavily in the hills for two days, preparations were made for the worst. At three o'clock the river was in many places level with the top of its banks, and shortly after, it began to overflow at the end of Fuller Street west. There the water came over so rapidly, that our reporter, who walked along the centre of the road to Sneyd's Town dry shod, found it over his boot-tops on returning, not five minutes having elapsed between the two journeys. Great anxiety was felt in the town at to the likelihood of the new embankment at Hassall's being able to stand such a force of water as was then coming down the river, it being allowed by all to be the heaviest fresh known in the river since the province was peopled by Europeans. Anxious fears were expressed during the morning as to the stability of the embankment, when about half-past three in the afternoon, the news arrived in town that the bank had given way, and that the water was pouring in upon Sneyd's Town. On visiting the island this was found to be too trim, as the whole of Peraki Street, Ohoka Road, Fulller Street and Sneyd's Town, were more or less under water. On visiting the embankment, we found that about five chains in length at the end nearest Mr. Sneyd's house had been washed

away. The volume of water making its way through the gap, was something terrible to look at. There could be no doubt that it was from the place where the river broke through at the last inundation, that the river made its way into Sneyd's Town and Peraki Streets. The current had swept everything before it; post and rail fences, mud banks, hay stacks, and gorse hedges had all disappeared. The depth of the water could not be less than five feet; it was fortunate that some notice had been given, and that the catastrophe was, to a certain extent expected, as through these means the inhabitants had made some preparations for it by removing their goods, cattle, and poultry, to a place of safety. Had this not been the case, the damage done, and loss of property, would have been more considerable. On returning to town, the stream was found to becoming down the river with increased velocity, and some anxiety was felt for White's old bridge, which was known to be in a very shaky condition, and furthermore that if it gave way, it would probably, seriously damage the new bridge. Precautionary measures were promptly taken, by removing the unsafe part, which was done without accident. At five o'clock the tide was coming in again, and the river continued to rise, as also the water in the streets. The centres of some of the roads were however dry all the evening, until about twelve o'clock, when the whole of them on the south side of the river, except the North road, were impassable. As a proof of the rapidity with which the water rose at this time, we may mention that, in the course of two hours on Saturday night, it rose full 20 inches in the houses in Peraki Street.

Shortly after twelve o'clock on Saturday night, the water began to subside, and continued doing so all Sunday, when the crown of the roads were again passable. Beyond this, however, it did not subside, as the footpaths, houses, and gardens were knee-deep all day. At about eleven o'clock on Sunday night the water began to rise once more, and by four o'clock on Monday morning, it had again covered the streets. It continued rising, until many of the streets were more like rivers than anything else, the current, in some places, being a perfect rapid. At eight o'clock, the whole of the houses and properties lying to the west of North road, and the north of and including both sides of Ohoka Road, were, without an exception, from three to five feet under water ; the goods, in many instances, having to be removed from the first and second shelves of the shop-windows. On the north side of the river, affairs were not quite so bad, although a great number, of the houses and gardens were flooded to a depth of three or four feet. Charles Street, Jones Street, Beswick Street, and part of Sewell Street, were impassable. The worst sufferer on this side was, undoubtedly, the Rev. W. W. Willock whose property, unfortunately, lies some feet lower than his neighbours. As soon as day broke on Monday morning, the most strenuous endeavours were made by those unaffected by the flood to relieve their neighbours in distress. The streets presented a most busy and at the same time distressing aspect, men on foot, on horseback, and in boats, to the number of 29 or 30 being engaged in rescuing the persons and property of the inundated from danger. The first care, after removing the inhabitants, was, of course, to secure all floating articles, but, notwithstanding the strenuous endeavours of all, the streets were pretty well strewed with firewood, posts and rails, tubs, boxes, tin dishes, and in some instances might be seen a number of fowls taking a compulsory voyage of discovery on a floating log of wood. Where all, who were not otherwise engaged with their own troubles were so energetic in assisting the sufferers, it would almost be invidious to particularize. There were, however, one or two who were more than ordinarily energetic, and who therefore deserve a word of commendation. Amongst those, we may mention Messrs. R. and W. Wright, and I. Wilson, who worked most zealously all the morning with a boat in conveying the inhabitants of Sneyd's Town to places of safety. Messrs. R. Greening and J. Craig, who laboured most arduously both on horseback and with boat in removing the sufferers in Peraki Street; and Mr. J. Simms, who, with his dray, conveyed a great number of families to more comfortable quarters. During Monday afternoon, Mr. Rickman's malt-house, which was built on a sod foundation, fell in with a loud crash, the sods having become softened and

undermined by the water Mr. Neville's chimney in Sewell Street, also fell down; being built of cob. The new bridge had also, a narrow escape from being seriously damaged, by a portion of an old jetty which was washed against it with great violence, from opposite the old Northern Hotel. The bridge was very severely shaken. All the empty houses on dry ground, were at once taken possession of, by those who had no friends and who could not obtain accommodation at the hotels. It is impossible to particularize each case of damage sustained. That the land inundated, presented during the past two days a most pitiable and distressing appearance will easily be admitted. To estimate the extent of damage done would be impossible, but this is certain, it is the most disastrous occurrence that has ever been known in Canterbury. The catastrophe is the more to be regretted when we state that the principal sufferers are those who are least capable of bearing the loss. Within the blocks of land bounded by the streets above named, we venture to say there is not a resident who has not suffered to the extent of at least £10 or £15; this must not however, be taken as an average, but as the lowest individual loss: it is probable eight or ten times that amount will not cover the loss of some of the farmers and owners of large gardens. We can scarcely at present, realize the damage done, but of this we may be certain, that it will be the cause of great distress, especially by those whose husbands are away at the shearing, or at the diggings, and for this reason will the Christmas of 1865 be remembered for years to come by both old and young of Kaiapoi.

On Tuesday the water still remained knee deep on a great portion of the land in the vicinity of Sneyd's Town and Peraki Street, as it is also in the street named, where it is likely to remain for some time, unless some means are devised to carry it away. The land where a great quantity of the water lies, is too low to drain itself, and thus, unless assisted will remain flooded for some time. The river is gradually subsiding.

Action has been taken by the Municipal Council. A meeting was held on Tuesday, and it was decided to employ gangs of men to cut drains to take off the water which has lodged in the streets.

Although the prompt measures taken by the Kaiapoi Municipal Council in causing cuttings to be made across several of the streets in the direction of the river have been of considerable service in removing a great quantity of water from the streets and properties on both sides of the river, yet we are sorry to say that all the houses on the south side previously still remain untenable, being several inches deep in water. The river is still very high, and gives little promise of subsiding to its usual level for some days,

When the cuttings were commenced by the Council, it was expected that they would speedily have cleared the whole of the land from water; this, however, has not been the case, neither will it until the bank at Hassall's is made good, or the river decreases very much in volume, inasmuch as it still overflows in considerable quantities at the point above-named, flooding the adjacent properties as fast as it is drained away, The attention of the Council was drawn to this, and men were at once set to work to stop the overflow, if possible. We fear, however, their labours will be attended with little success, us over five chains of the bank lately erected are washed away, and the river, coming round with a sudden sweep, and having a dead set into the banks at this point, will render any temporary measures futile. It is thus that we fear the streets and houses will not be clear of water until the river subsides. The whole of the streets on the south side of the river, previously flooded, are still impassable for foot-passengers, the crowns of the roads, except in a few exceptional cases, being still several inches under water. On the north side the inhabitants are, however, more fortunate, the water haying almost entirely disappeared, the roads all being passable. The usual accompaniments of a flood, consisting of

slime, shingle, flax-roots, and other debris, have of course been left behind in large quantities, rendering the streets, although free from water, very unpleasant for foot passengers. The inconvenience and discomfort to which the inhabitants of the south side of the river have been subject to, apart from the loss and damage sustained during the past four days, has been very great, those who were unable to find accommodation at the hotels being obliged to take refuge in the unoccupied houses, which, in many cases, were not only more than pleasantly ventilated, but windowless, and totally devoid of any facilities for cooking. It is, however, to be hoped that this unfortunate state of affairs will speedily be altered, and the various families enabled to return to their homes. The question of opening a subscription-list for relieving the sufferers is already agitated in the town and district, and before this appears in print will probably have practically commenced; as, however, the trifle that may be raised in this district may be small, the number of persons who are not themselves really sufferers in one way or the other being few, it is to be hoped that other parts of the province will quickly take the matter in hand to assist the sufferers. Should any be doubtful as to the damage and the necessity of assistance, we would earnestly recommend such to visit the town themselves and receive ocular demonstration of the fact. As yet, we have given no list of the amount of damage individually sustained, having been unable to obtain one. This will not be fully known until the water is cleared from the various properties; when this is accomplished we will then attempt to give a list of losses as far as can be ascertained.

We may mention, in conclusion, that Sneyd's Town still remains about three feet under water. The report that Mr. D. Coutts' mill had been washed away has turned out incorrect; it appears that it is the bridge alone that suffered.

On Wednesday the fresh in the Waimakariri was continuing steadily, though slowly, to decrease; the overflow at the old cemetery has been stopped by a temporary embankment, consisting of stakes driven into the ground and hacked with timber and earth. By this means any further quantity of water was prevented from making its way into Sneyd's Town and Peraki Street. Since this was accomplished the flood has been gradually subsiding, being assisted in drawing itself away by the numerous cuttings made under the superintendence of the Council. The crowns of the roads in Peraki and Fuller Streets are now dry, although the footpaths and side-channels still remain several feet under water. One or two of the houses being situated on higher ground than others are now free from water; the occupants are busy clearing them out, a matter of no little trouble or difficulty. The land and gardens are still knee-deep. In Ohoka Road the centre of the road is also clear in many places, although the footpaths and side-channels are in the same state as in Peraki Street. In Sneyd's Town affairs are in much the same condition. If no other fresh comes down the river, it is expected that the principal portion of the property on the island will be free from water in the course of another twenty-four hours; but, on the contrary, should the river again rise, even if only ten or twelve inches, Sneyd's Town, &c., would be again inundated, as the temporary work done to the bank at the old cemetery would not be capable of resisting the stream. Now that the water is subsided, it is easily perceived where the fault lay in the erection of the late embankment, and which was undoubtedly, the first cause of its giving way. At the north end of the embankment, nearest Mr. Sneyd's, there is a ditch running almost in a straight course with the stream of the river. This ditch, was either not stopped up at all at the end nearest the river, or if so, it was not done securely, and the consequence was, that even when the river was little above its usual height, the water made its way down the ditch, gradually undermining the embankment. We do not say that this was the sole cause of the inundation, inasmuch, as we believe, that had the bank been ever so firm, the late fresh was of such magnitude, that it would have overflowed the bank had it not otherwise been let out. We merely notice the matter in the hope that it may be guarded

against in future, should another embankment be erected where the present one is washed away. In previously mentioning those who were so anxious and energetic in assisting their unfortunate neighbours, we omitted the names of Messrs. Walter Hewson, and George Edmonds, who, we are since informed, were the first to render assistance to the inhabitants of Sneyd's Town, by means of a boat, which they procured from the river in Kaiapoi. We would also mention the kindness with which Messrs. B. Jeffs, of the Sneyd's Arms, and Mr. I. Wilson, received and gratuitously provided for those who were flooded out of their own homes. The first named gentleman has had no less than fifty, and the last-named, twenty of the sufferers under his roof since Saturday evening. Other residents in the town and neighbourhood have, of course, also provided accommodation for the sufferers; but we believe the two above-named have had the greatest portion of the burden to bear.

In noticing the gradual clearance of the various streets from water, it would be unjust not to mention the indefatigable energy and perseverance with which Mr. Mathew Hall has worked in the matter. It is to him, undoubtedly, that the inhabitants are most indebted for being able so soon to re-occupy their houses, as he was the first to suggest, and practically commence, the various cuttings to assist in draining away the water, and also to erect the temporary embankment at the old cemetery.

The Kaiapoi Flood.—We give below an estimate of the principal losses sustained by the inhabitants of the town of Kaiapoi and Sneyd's Town during the late flood Raven Street—Mr. J. D. Macpherson, merchant; the loss sustained is estimated at from £280 to £300, being damage done to fifty-nine bales of wool; the wareroom in which the wool was stored was one foot deep in water when first observed, at five o'clock in the morning, and the manager being unable to obtain assistance to remove the bales, they were obliged to remain in the water upwards of twelve hours. Mr. Porter had a large garden under water; damage, £6. Mr. Hammett, of the Mandeville Hotel, hotel and half-an-acre of garden, three feet under water; damage sustained, £25. This corner of Black and Raven streets caught the full force of the water from the whole island, as it made its way into the river again; at this point the force was so great that it was almost impossible to stand in the middle of the road; the piles of the hotel were all loosened, and holes four and five feet in depth made by the scouring of the water under the house. Mr. Hammett was obliged to throw every door of his house open, to allow the water a clear way through, or he believes the hotel would have been carried bodily away. The loss sustained consists of several gallons of spirits lost, damage to house, and loss of potato and other crops in the garden, the same being literally scoured out of the earth by the water. Mr. M. Hall, cooper, house and garden, from two to three feet deep in water; damage, £15, from loss of timber, tools spoilt, and loss of garden crop. Black street.—Mr. A. Weston, baker, store, bake-house, and half-an-acre garden from two to three feet under water; damage, £60, from loss of salt, soda, and damage done to soap, flour and crops of garden. James Shaw, damage, £20; house and one acre garden, three feet under water, crop of garden potatoes destroyed and damaged. Peraki Street.—Mr. J. Mathews, damage to house and garden crop, £115. Mr. J. Keetley, blacksmith, house, workshop and paddocks four feet under water; loss of tools, portions of reaping machines, &c, floated away, damage to bellows and house, and wages paid to men whilst flood lasted damage, £60. J. Winterbourn, storekeeper, house, half-acre garden, and paddock two feet under water; loss of stores, hives of bees, honey, and crop of vegetables; damage, £20. Mr. W. Hall, wheelwright, house, garden, and workshop four feet under water; tools, clothing, and several very valuable engravings destroyed. Mr. Hall was awoke on Christmas morning by water making its way into his bed; when he arose he found all his boxes, in which were stored clothing, books, engravings, &c., floating about in the various rooms; damage, £30. Messrs. H, Keetley, Riseiy, Jones, W. Weston, Moody, Brunt, Francis, G.

Weston, D. Gunn, W. McDonald, Birch, Hunter, Sherrat, and White had also their houses and gardens flooded, averaging from two feet to three feet deep. The damage done in these cases might be averaged at about £10, principally arising from loss of potato and other crops, and damage to house and wearing apparel. The potato crops destroyed were the second planted this year, the first having been destroyed by the flood in November last. Mr. Sherrat had also a cob chimney destroyed. There were six other inhabitants in the same street, who might be said to have suffered to the extent of about £5 each. Mr. Dobbs, house and one-acre fruit garden four feet under water, £100; Mr. Grant, Kaikanui Hotel; hotel, garden, store-room, concert-room, and paddocks two feet under water, damage £200; 15 tons of hay, a quantity of oats, and about 50 square yards of cob work destroyed. Mr. Henwood, damage to garden crops, and to clothing, £20. Ohoka Road.—D. Dudley, house and garden two feet under water., loss of garden crop, fruit, &c.; damages, £50. Mr. Haur, house and garden one foot under water, damage, £15. Mr. James Stanton, house, yards and 23 acres sown in oats under water, and 10 acres grassed land, and 40 head of poultry drowned; damage, £100. Otaki Street.— Messrs. Wake, Elliott, and three others, houses and gardens from two to three feet under water; average loss about £10. Sneyd's Town. —Mr. Yogler, house and one acre garden four feet under water, loss of potatoes, 800 feet of timber, quantity of firewood; damage, £30. Mr. Mellor, house, garden and paddock four feet .under water, stack of hay, potato crops, and a quantity of cob work destroyed; damage, £30. William Dudson, house and two acres of oats and potatoes four feet under water damages £30; George Edmonds, house and one acre wheat and potatoes four feet under water, and cob chimney destroyed; damage, £20; Messrs. W. Hewson, Jones, Smith, — Bowen, James Renshaw, William Leathern, George Byron, James M'Collom, and — Backhouse, each had house and half acre garden under water, sustaining an average loss of about £10, principally from potato crops destroyed. Messrs. Leathern, Byron, and M'Collom appeared to have caught the full force of the fresh, their property being directly opposite that part of the embankment which gave way, became the general repository of everything floatable which had previously stood between them and the embankment, consisting of post and rails, hay and straw stacks, tubs, fire-wood, &c. Several other inhabitants of Sneyd's Town also suffered, but in a smaller amount than those above-named. This is the fifth inundation which has visited Sneyd's Town. Mr. J. Beswick was also a severe sufferer, the whole of his house, garden, and paddocks being several feet under water. Several fences and banks opposite the place where the embankment gave way were destroyed. Fuller Street. —Mr. Baker's house, land, and paddock three feet under water; £150 to £200 damage done to 37 acres of oats, 10 acres of grassed land and house; also poultry drowned. On the north side the principal sufferers were Captain Morgan, W. W. Willock, G. P. Day, and J. Perrin. The damage, in all amounts to from £50 to £60. Mr. Birch had several bales of wool damaged. Mr. Rickman, —house, brewery and garden two feet under water, malt house, which was built upon a cob foundation, falling in, quantity of grain destroyed, house and garden injured; damage, £300. Kaiapoi Municipal Council, from £150 to £200 damage to streets, foot-paths and culverts. In many of the streets, the shingle was entirely washed away, both from the roads and footpaths, and in many others, holes two and three feet deep, by ten and twenty feet long, were made by the scouring of the current. The above does not include the cost the Council will be put to in draining away the stagnant water from off the various properties. This will probably cost £100 more. The foregoing account is merely given as an approximate estimate of damage done by the flood; but in all instances it is thought to be rather under than over the mark. Taking the different amounts specified, a total of nearly £2000 will be arrived at, which will pretty fairly represent the disastrous effects of the late inundation.

End.